

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 966  
By McLeary

A RESOLUTION to recognize musician and producer Norbert Putnam for his outstanding career achievements.

WHEREAS, Tennessee has long been known throughout the world for its rich musical heritage; talented musicians from across the Nation have traveled to Nashville to begin legendary careers that have earned Music City U.S.A. a reputation that is unsurpassed in the history of American music; and

WHEREAS, one such legendary musical talent is Norbert Putnam, who became a bass player during the mid-'50s because his father, Gentry, played it before him; as a child in Florence, Alabama, Norbert Putnam would come in from school at three o'clock and practice playing along with records until bedtime; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Putnam moved to Muscle Shoals in 1961, where he began his career as an original member of The Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section; as the nucleus of the early hit-making scene in Muscle Shoals, Norbert Putnam played bass on classic hits by Arthur Alexander, Joe South, Tommy Roe, The Tams, and others, and his band opened for The Beatles at their first concert in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, the promise of greater money and opportunity lured Norbert Putnam and some of his band mates to Nashville, where he quickly became one of Nashville's most in-demand session bassists, particularly for the more pop, rock, and R & B-oriented material; his credits include records by Elvis Presley, The Monkees, Linda Ronstadt, Tony Joe White, Roy Orbison, Manhattan Transfer, and Henry Mancini; and

WHEREAS, in the years that followed, the band members of The Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section accompanied the "Who's Who" of Nashville's burgeoning 1970s pop/rock community;

Norbert Putnam was then asked to produce a record for folk artist Joan Baez; the result was the million-selling single, “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Putnam was then inundated with offers to produce other artists, and over the next ten years produced fourteen platinum albums with such diverse talents as Jimmy Buffett (*Margaritaville*), Dan Fogelberg (*Longer*), Donovan, The New Riders of the Purple Sage, and Kris Kristofferson; he has also received three Dove Awards for his production of Christian artists such as Michael Card and Shirley Caesar; and

WHEREAS, while Nashville was focused on country music through the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s, Norbert Putnam was producing much of the non-country music that passed through the city during that time; he has always enjoyed fiddling with the technology as much as with the music, and he is recognized as the originator of that “other” Nashville sound, the one that has little to do with steel guitars and fiddles, the one Nashville ultimately embraced in its rush to pop music in the 1990s; and

WHEREAS, if an artist or an idea wasn’t country and wanted to come to Nashville, it usually wound up on one of Mr. Putnam’s doorsteps – the ones leading to the four seminal recording studios in which he was involved; Norbert Putnam founded some of Nashville’s most famous and successful recording studios, including Quadraphonic Records; formed in 1970 and located on Grand Avenue, it hosted such artists as Michael Jackson, Neil Young (*Harvest*), Bob Seger, James Taylor, Joan Baez, Jimmy Buffet, and Dan Fogelberg, and is now nearing its fourth decade of operation as Nashville’s most profitable independent recording studio; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, Mr. Putnam constructed the studios at The Bennett House, an 1875 Victorian mansion in suburban Franklin and the first recording studio in Franklin, which is now entering its third successful decade of operation; Amy Grant was the first artist of renown to record at Bennett House, and the guest book has since noted such signatures as Whitney Houston, Vanessa Williams, and Michael McDonald; and

WHEREAS, Norbert Putnam also formed a music publishing company, Danor Music, Inc., with best friend David Briggs; writers such as Will Jennings (“Up Where We Belong,” “My Heart Will Go On”), Troy Seals (ASCAP Hall of Fame), and Max Barnes (CMA Hall of Fame) have helped place Danor among Nashville’s top ten music publishing companies; and

WHEREAS, tired of running to New York and Los Angeles for mastering, Norbert Putnam founded Georgetown Masters in 1985, and under the guidance of Denny Purcell, it has become Nashville's most successful mastering facility and one of the finest in North America; another Putnam firm, NP Acoustics, provided the acoustic design of the rooms; and

WHEREAS, Norbert Putnam has appeared on more than ten thousand recordings, worked with hundreds of artists, bought and sold as much real estate around Music Row as Chet Atkins and Owen Bradley, and owned more studios than both of them put together; and

WHEREAS, Norbert Putnam has enjoyed a long and successful career in music and audio; as a musician, arranger, producer, engineer, and businessman, he is one of the most versatile talents in the history of Nashville music; and

WHEREAS, his immeasurable talent and innovative approach have enabled him to leave an indelible mark on Nashville and secured for him his rightful place as an icon in its remarkable archives; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we recognize the illustrious career and extraordinary musical talents of this remarkable man; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Norbert Putnam for his legendary musical talent as a musician, arranger, producer, engineer, and businessman, his unique influence upon so many great artists of our time, and his singular contributions to the history of Nashville music, and, indeed, American music. We extend to him our best wishes for much continued success in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.